THE TRADER'S WIFE

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THE TRADER'S WIFE

THE TRADER'S WIFE

Jean Kenyon Mackenzie

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André Durenceau

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MANUFACTURED IN THE U. S. A.

She that dwells

Ten leagues beyond man's life; she

that from Naples

Can have no note, unless the sun were post.

THE TEMPEST

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BOOK ONE

THE BRIDE

Chapter One

HARFORD WATCHED HIS WIFE PACK HER clothes. It was a strange thing, he thought, that he could not modify her industry. All her savings, the fruit of that life of drudgery from which their marriage had withdrawn her, were transmuted into furbelows that were tossed about the room. An open box received her bodice of green velvet,

a lemon-colored dolman with fringe, a padded jacket—he fidgeted and gazed moodily at the padded jacket, remembering the West Coast. He sighed with a memory too heavy of its heavy air. He wished he could prepare his wife for Africa; he roused himself to try again, but she walked away from him into the dimmer end of the long room, to tauten the square end of her Paisley shawl, one end of which he found himself, incredibly, to be holding. Her white arms were busy with the many-colored fabric, folding it with large gestures, intent on bringing it into small compass. She had no inner ear for his warning.

"I understand, Mr. Harford, it will be warm. But a lady must maintain her common state; those about her must be done the honor of an effort to please."

"Those about her!" said Harford. "Who and where are they? I tell you, Lucy, there

are not to be five white men in ten days' journey—no, nor in a month of journeying." But he checked himself; he was not a man to persist in futile effort, and his wife's eyes, wide at gaze, were empty of apprehension. She would dress, she said, for the five.

He suddenly wished that she were a sea captain's daughter—there were many of these in the town of Newport. Surely a captain's daughter would entertain some faint misgiving as to the isolations and miseries of the wilderness. And might—the idea visited him—be induced to stay at home. And would be, perhaps, likely enough, less romantic. He sighed. His animosities toward her passionate vanities died down, and in the ebb of these there emerged a fundamental misgiving of the circumstance. How came he to have married her? Not for her beauty—though she was good-looking, he thought, dwelling on her now in her vivid animations,

white-armed among the velvets and silks of her novel and cherished wardrobe. A fine figure of a woman, pressing out into her future like a ship's head, the figure-head on the *Abundance,* that ship on which he had last served his country—like that, with her skirts surging behind her activities like the garments of that eternally wind-blown eager image. Eager, that was the word—how came he to have married an eager woman? And the vast lassitudes of his African experience flowed in upon him. He drowned in that tide.

An hour from then he must dress in the room that was his and Lucy's. He was forty-six years old and had not, until his marriage, occupied a common room. He would not, he thought, in Africa; there, he thought, he would take this matter in hand. "Before we settle down we will settle that" —and he found himself remembering the

bark cabin he had built himself on his last tour, silent in its forest clearing halfway round the world, empty of any civilized convenience; and a good thing, too, he told himself, looking about at the clutter of their quarters. His wife at the dressing table drew out the long sweep of her hair—white arms and black hair, the daffodil blossoms of the candles, and a golden light on her breast. He saw that her gesture was noble. Their eyes meeting in the mirror, hers fastened upon this appreciation, and, turning about, she offered her lips with a smiling assurance. Her innocent abandonment moved him; he proceeded in a lighter mood.

The weather was cold; he felt the comfort of the buffalo robe that covered them in the sleigh, and, with his faculties of perception sharpened by his African exile, he appreciated the glowing lights of the house into which they came, shedding their snow at the

door. Warmth and warm lights gushed out upon them; they saw the stir of women with sleek hair, their dresses full about them like flowers. His misgiving that he was to suffer the untellable miseries of ennui fell away from his heart; he would be, he promised himself, the ten-day bridegroom that he was, and more truly his wife's husband, taking thought of her pride and the value she put upon her conquest, which she had no art to cover. He swore he would not dwell on this to-night, and forced his attention from her frank display and her dovelike preenings.

He answered with the necessary civility the habitual questions about the West Coast, its climate, its comforts and provender, its peoples; and he watched with his habitual bitterness the uncomprehending laughter at things not humorous and the tentative returns to the aspect of the Negro and his

nudity. A black maid was in waiting; she wore a gown of linsey over hoops; she paused in midstream to dwell upon his sayings, something haunted in her eyes. He thought, "There is a fine girl," and he saw her packed in the middle tray of a slaver, brought out to the air at sunrise and at sunset, sluiced down with water daily, and shivering in the advancing cold of the voyage. He felt the irony of her skirt and hoop; his civilized and determined urbanity was on the ebb, and when he had to answer the toast to his marriage, with its larded phrases of romantic anticipation, its allusions to his wife's reputation as a poetess,—a tenth Muse, and now to be the Muse of travel,—he rose to his feet a rebel, disclaiming the romantic aspects of their future and hoping tersely that his wife would have the courage and the good sense to bear her lot in a dull and monotonous round.

Poetry would never help her to do that, and if she felt herself irrevocably dedicated to the romantic she had best, he said, stay at home among her admirers, while he went abroad about his business. And he sat down, pleased neither with himself—knowing well the degree of his self-indulgence—nor with the company, who were past rallying. Lucy, who was pale, fixed him with a stricken eye, and he looked away from her to meet the gaze of the Negress, wide and fascinated. The glance he gave her was a blow and the very movement of his irritation. She vanished; and so, if he could have had his will, would have vanished the dinner company. But no, they were reviving, and soon he must agree with them that the antislavery activities of Mr. Garrison were unseemly and that the institution of slavery was holy, forecast in the Bible. To his own mind Mr. Garrison had been negligible, an idealist.

He had neither read his speeches nor leaned to his reputed opinions, but he felt a present unsuspected repulsion and a bitter negation of these people, so remote from blood and stench. They were telling, without imagination, of the ladies of Boston who had been but recently stoned for their antislavery pretensions.

Chapter Two

LATER HE BEGGED LUCY TO STAY AT HOME. "You haven't an idea of what it is like," he told her; "it is dreary—unspeakably; the surf is a wall, and the forest is another, about an empty room." And while he spoke to her of this, African solitudes possessed his heart like an enchantment. But they were not for her, he was sure. As for

slavery and slaving—he could not think either she or her friends would survive the scent of a slave ship, let alone the sight of one or the sound. Lucy, looking at him, was startled out of her mood of self-pity. "It is no more than my duty," she told him.

Lucy's duty, which he had married with Lucy, was to be, he began to feel, a governing factor in his life. He wondered how much of his panic and rebellion was due to bile—the West Coast life, as he well knew, was a thing of bile and spleen; but Lucy was not to be told when he had a chill, else her duty to nurse him would be more than he could bear.

To church on Sunday, as Lucy's duty, the two of them went, admirable in aspect, as was much observed. A stranger in the pulpit was preaching an abolition sermon—a zealous soul all tortured with his zeal. "This very day," he told them, "while you

sit at ease in Zion, a free people in a free country, there are wretched blacks at sea, packed in trays like dried fish, stinking like fish, some of them to die before the sun has set and to be cast into the sea. Who are the murderers of these?"

"The abolitionists do so much exaggerate," Lucy told him on the way home. "They could not exaggerate," he said; and at that she wondered, not knowing how he could speak so, whose business had once been, in his youth, the Trade. She would have questioned him, but his grim look checked her.

"My husband is a stern man," she told her friends, "but not with me"; and she contrived for their benefit a melting Harford, tender and yielding. She had really at first supposed this to be true—else why had he married her? She had only to remember the speed of their courtship to be reassured,

even now, that he was tender and yielding. They were not three weeks met when they were married. Lucy and her friends thought this romantic. They had met in Captain Shaw's house at a dinner. Lucy, in white with blue ribbons, had been that gay creature whose sorrows are hidden—all her friends knew this of her, and presently one of them told Harford:—

"There is the pluckiest, the most brilliant girl in the city of Newport. To see her, you would never know that it is her fate to be a drudge. She is a drudge, sir—an orphan; nothing but her own courage and industry lies between her and want." It was told him further that she was much desired as a reader, and that her poetry, written in her rare leisure, was impassioned, noble, and uplifting.

That she was a pretty woman Harford had observed; but her local fame did not

hang, it seemed, upon that. Indeed, her local fame was kept bright by her female friends; her schoolmates, grown up and married, assiduously told their husbands how superior a person Lucy Williams was, and the reports passed on to Harford were verbatim. Harford, meeting her, had them by heart, and in a conversation prematurely intimate he had from herself the sad story of her life. All her gayety omitted, she discovered to him her long struggle, her hours of labor late and early, and her present favorable reputation. Harford had, it seemed, read a long tale of hers in verse; he had thought it fine, and told her so. Tears filled her gray eyes; they brimmed on her curled lashes, and Harford was moved. The evoked image was clear, and it was quite true of him, as Lucy supposed, that he was vulnerable.

But the chink in the armor, if indeed it

was over the heart, was not to be pierced by passion. Harford was compassionate to poverty; he knew her to be poor. Newly come from the isolations of Africa, he was more susceptible than was his habit to the appeal of a pretty woman. He was pursued, and he did not shy away. As for Lucy, she knew herself to be incapable of the indelicacies of a pursuit. She was not, she hoped, a woman to love a man unasked —there was that in him, she told her friends, that broke down her reserve. It cannot truly be said that Harford married her from an impulse of pity and in cold blood; it was one of those unions that are fortuitous—the fruit of a favorable season. It is quite certain that if Harford had been married before he would not have married again.

They sailed upon the *Arrow*. Captain Rogers was in measure a partner in Harford's trading venture, had known him for

years, and had shipped more than one cargo for him before the slave trade had ceased to be, for Harford, a legitimate business. The captain had brought the trader to Newport, from which a line of goods was to be had of the sort that was replacing, for a growing demand, the slaver's cargo. Rogers had Harford's little fortune in the hold of the *Arrow;* the beads and calicoes and ironware—above all, the rum—were there. Harford would be trading for ivory, ebony, and palm oil. He had a theoretical passion for his venture; it was the fruit of a slow-grown conviction that the commercial future of Africa was dawning with the decline of the slave trade. He brought to his business a perfected technique of contact with the primitive African, and he felt himself to touch upon the time when his many projects, not realizable in the slave trade, would justify themselves. His designs

pressed the more upon his attention because there was none with whom he might share them—not the captain, and certainly not his wife.

Captain Rogers had known Lucy Williams all her life, and for him her presence on his ship was a madness. He could not reconcile it with anything he knew either of

the West Coast, which in itself he despised, or of Harford, whom he admired. He gave it up once at least every day. Lucy came aboard drowned in tears—and well, he thought, she did to cry. He gave her the best of his cabins, save his own. Vaguely he hoped, and he strangely expected, that she would be seasick the better part of the voyage. He had been sixty days at sea on his last return. He was unprepared for her appearance on deck the third day out and on the next day for her appearance at mess with her assembled airs and graces.

Lucy, pale but affable, put him ill at ease in his own saloon. It annoyed him to put his pipe aside when she entered there. It annoyed him to see his chief mate's head sleeked with pomade and to smell it. It fretted him to find her at his elbow when at midday he took his reckonings, and he dreaded her questioning about the ship's run

and the morrow's weather and about his personal adventures—in particular, about the slave trade. It was not in his experience to discuss the slave trade except as a business. He was not ashamed of it; he considered that his equipment was of the best and that his methods were as good as might be. He had never thrown a cargo into the sea—he recounted this to his credit, and he told Lucy of the time when he had with his own hands, after the death of his surgeon, dressed the more deadly sores of his poor wretches. But he found a strange complacency in this young lady who was reconciled to the noted miseries of the middle passage. He supposed that she could hardly know the truth of them, and, musing further, he sniffed the air of his cabin, suffering from an odor which it seemed to him had not quite gone off his ship.

"I hate like hell the smell of those nig-

gers," he told Harford. "The last lot had been a month in barracoon, and for that, or for some other cause, they smelled the worst of any cargo I ever carried. I had the ship painted in Baltimore, but I smell it even in my sleep." Harford, looking at the old man's grimace, said he didn't smell it; but he did, the whiff of it bringing back his own contacts with such cargoes in his time. It was curious that Lucy never spoke of this, the more as they were coming into tropical latitudes, when a ship gives up her essential odor of whatever kind.

Chapter Three

LUCY, WHO HAD AT FIRST CRIED OUT ALL day upon the novelty of her circumstance, was now crying out upon its monotony, for with an unbroken easy monotony the ship slid into the tropics. It was a voyage without port of call, and without incident but one. Of this incident the captain loved to tell until the day he died; there was no mate to it in his experience.

On the fortieth day out from Newport, the ship then being Lat. 9°, Long. 17°, and off the Ivory Coast, the morning being fair and the sea calm, the ship overhauled a man adrift on the flat of a squared log, very large. The log was such as is shipped from the West Coast, of African mahogany. It was the strangeness of that lonely craft, so dark on the wrinkled brilliance of the morning sea, that struck the captain's imagination. The man was black; he lay upon the log asprawl—dead to the eye, or dying. But he did not die; the sailors tended him, and with evening he began to revive. Within a day or two he stood upon his legs that were shackled. Naked in his tattoo and chains, he stood before the captain. He had no word to say; he looked at the sea and the ship with a vacant eye. A rag was put about him, and he sat with his back against a capstan.

In the week after this adventure Lucy had a birthday, and said so; the captain then made her a present of the man.

"He is lost from a slaver, ma'am, either by way of escape or because he was thrown away with others when the ship was overhauled by a cruiser—though that would not be likely; those that are put over the side in such a time are weighted. Well, we'll never know from him. He has a look of the people of the Niger—he will be a handsome nigger when his sores are healed and he has put a stone or two on his bones. I trust he will do you many years' service. Bring him aft," he told the steward, "and see that he comes decent to the lady."

Lucy thought this a most romantic present. She waited, smiling, in the pool of the cabin light until the Negro was thrust in and stood by the door. He was now recovered from the blight of his privations; the

steward had put a red cloth about his loins. His age would be near to thirty; he was of a good black, tall, and elegant with an animal elegance. In his face that was a tragic mask his eyes were shocking in their vitality —they looked about the world in vain. Coming to light upon Lucy, they rested, they were stayed with wonder; wonder then possessed them, and the poor wretch who had long not known ease from rage and fear was eased by a preoccupation.

Lucy was intimidated by the strangeness of that creature breathing presently so close to her, for the captain had the steward bring him forward, and himself with his hand on the nape of the Negro's neck made him kneel. The dark body bent beside her white skirt.

"This be your Big Massa," the captain told him, and by that word "Massa," or by some intimation that hung in the air,

the Negro was informed—Harford knew it; he knew too that he was struck with wonder, asking himself if this were a boy or a girl or a woman, looking with an immediate hunger of curiosity into Lucy's face, pale between bands of dark hair.

Harford saw his wife fluttered. She had thought of a slave as she had known slaves —civilized and broken, dressed in linsey-woolsey, and saying, "Yes, ma'am"; but this man—so striding and so wild, looking at her with such wide eyes—she did not feel to be a slave.

She looked at her husband, and he drew the Negro's eyes. "Get up!" he told him, and the man rose. Smart fellow, Harford thought, and had him led away.

Thereafter Lucy's slave was pupil to the steward and began to learn the difference between a towel and a pillow case. Harford, who had taught many a black boy to

lay the cloth, thought well of this one. He gave him the name Atemba. The possession of Atemba was a burning pride in the heart of his mistress, and she became habituated to it. In the letters she wrote home she exploited this event, and a kind of epic account of it appeared a year from then, in the *Newport News*. Old sea captains read it and grinned at Lucy Williams's account of her nigger.

But Harford saw it as a reconciling element in his wife's introduction to the Coast. His imagination began to be busy with this difficulty; he had no illusions as to the bleakness of the prospect, and the captain, with the best will in the world, did nothing to help him. The customary West Coast gossip recurred; the deaths by fever, the misadventures and extremes of nostalgia, the fatalities by poison, by snake bite, the lonely madnesses—all these familiar makings of

African biography were, as ever, common talk at the table. Only there were none of the crew so hardy as to talk of women—for all Lucy heard, the white man in West Africa was a celibate.

The ship's course was set to Gaboon, where the captain would take on his Kru boys, discharge his cargo, and turn his vessel over to the Spaniards, with whom his agreement was made and who would assume command and ship the slaves that were gathered and waiting in barracoons. Under Spanish colors the *Arrow,* as the *Esperanza,* would make for a South American port. "But never fear," the captain told Lucy; "the *Arrow* will come to anchor off Newport as clean as she left it, for I'll have her painted once she is discharged at Bahia. Any little thing you will be sending your friends for a present I'll put into their hands myself. An ivory tusk, now; or a grass mat made

by the Galway people—though my wife complained when I brought her a mat; she said it smelled of mold. And so it did, ma'am—you'll see for yourself there is a smell of mold that hangs about the equator."

On the forty-seventh day out, the *Arrow* passed within landfall of the lovely small island of Elobi, ringed in its white surf. Every creature on the ship rejoiced to see it shining in an afternoon light on a pale sea. Lucy, holding the captain's glass to an inexpert eye, saw it swing into the empty air, perfectly brilliant. Vines hung down its white cliffs, and on the white sands below dark groups of people gathered and scattered and hailed the ship, their voices lost at sea. The captain told Lucy of a trader who had been killed there, the Benga people claiming that he had robbed them. The captain had rescued the trader's wife, calling

a month after the murder; he had found her in a little hut on the west side of the island, where she had kept herself without harm. The women of the island had fed her, but she had come aboard ship all but dead, and she had died at sea. "It's a hard country for a lady, ma'am," the captain told Lucy, who said that any country was hard for a dishonest man or woman of a poor spirit. And she watched the embowered island set in its ring of surf. She had no question to ask of that woman whose body, as the captain sometimes unhappily remembered, had been let down into the sea. "Your lady has a brave spirit," he told Harford, "but not an idea of this country."

With the next morning Lucy woke to the odor of land; past her porthole green trees drifted, and she heard the quartermaster chanting the mark on the lead line. She had slept while the ship came about into

the Gaboon estuary. But Harford had hardly slept the night; he saw the daylight come above the low dark land; presently the morning sky was pricked by the crests of the great trees that stood at the water's edge where the eyes of mariners looked to take their bearings. The surf running up the beach broke enormously, and, when the ship made the bar, broke there. With the sight of that surf, so familiar to him in his wandering, he accepted Africa afresh; the feeling of it came to him across the waters; what had seemed so strange to him in his chosen life as he had thought of it in civilized countries returned to inhabit his very soul, not stranger now than his own breath. Only his absence from these circumscribed and familiar things began already to seem strange; and, already almost forgotten, the sights and the sounds of the North began to sink down over the slope of the sea as

the ship came about into the still waters of the estuary.

Atemba leaned on the rail; he looked landward with an empty face. Harford judged that he was not a beach man and that he had no hope of a home beside the sea—of an inland tribe, doubtless, and certainly without the tribal marks of these parts. Harford was familiar with the tribes about the Gaboon; he had gone over this country with a fair degree of interest when he was planning his present venture. And his mind, fresh from his absence, sprang to meet his prospects; he told himself that he had the finest stock of trade goods that had ever been put ashore on these beaches, and the only stock of trade that was not for slaving. He could watch the slave trade perish, as he knew it must, without regret. The day for a legitimate trade had dawned, and he was ready for it.

Chapter Four

TWO SCHOONERS LAY AT ANCHOR OFF THE settlement of Glass. They carried the Spanish flag, Harford knew them for slavers, and he wondered whether old mates of his were aboard them. Neither had taken cargo as yet; their captains would wait for the dark to load, and would load, when they did, in one night; their trade was now pre-

carious, and their cargo would be brought down in canoes from some hidden point up-river. A third steamer, a four-master, he made out to be the *Straw;* she was taking lumber over the side. He rejoiced to see her, as he must come to agreements with her master. The sound of her winches, faint across the water, was sweet to him; he would be giving her cargo on her next voyage—pray God it would not be long. From the villages that lay along the north shore, and where the small huts were now visible, he heard the rhythm of drums—or did not hear them, so well he knew that sound. He marked the long wall of Taylor's barracoon and that no smoke of fires rose above the wattled walls—it must be that Taylor no longer kept his slaves there and that it was in disuse since the Patrol had become stricter.

When Lucy brushed in between him and

the motionless Atemba, Harford was shocked to see her, so utterly had she perished from his mind. Now she leaned on the rail, her sleek hair unruffled in the slight way of the ship, her cheek brown and red from the long voyage, not yet heated, her white dress spreading over the hoops she had resumed. Atemba looked at her without focus; for him she was not there, while for Harford she was there—strangely present. She began to ask questions; why had he not prepared himself for these?

He answered her with a half-attention. The Kru boys, laughing and shouting, were coming alongside in canoes, climbing the rope with their bundles in their teeth. His two or three friends were coming in their gigs; they would be looking for their rare letters. Taylor was first on deck, pulling at the collar of his shirt when he saw a woman, and, when he saw her to be a lady,

entirely confounded. His poor face, so pallid under the eye of Harford, fresh from home, was unshorn; his white cotton suit, entirely clean, was threadbare. He bowed as he had not done these five years, and he told Mrs. Harford, "I am proud to meet you, ma'am." He woke with a start when Harford told him they must beg his hospitality for the day or two before they should go up the river. Taylor was then painfully preoccupied, casting about in his mind, as Harford well knew, to remember the state of his quarters. And presently he rushed away.

"I'll not bring her ashore until evening," Harford told him.

"You damn fool, to bring a lady to this hole!" Taylor hissed as he passed him.

Harford sighed; neither he nor Taylor would have thought it a hole if it had not been for Lucy, and the two of them had a

day's business pressing them that would not wait. The captain himself must turn his eyes from his proper concerns because the Mpongwe girls, until to-day so welcome, had begun to clutter the deck. He began to bully them—what were the little sluts doing aboard a decent ship like his? "You take them beach girls for slop side," he told a tall grave Mpongwe youth, who was Taylor's headman, and who had serious business aboard ship.

"'Them beach girls be fine too much," said the youth, and he was indignant; "what for they no be fit for live for deck?"

"You no see white woman? You take them beach girls for slop side—white woman no be fit for like them beach girls!"

But the captain was wrong. Between the Mpongwe girls and Lucy there was a strong magnetism and a passionate curiosity. Lucy was looking upon the flower of a notable

tribe; those heads so smoothly dressed and set with fretted combs of ivory were all turned her way. Those dark faces, emptied by wonder of any lesser feeling, all fed upon her strangeness. They drifted to her softly, they softly knelt beside her, and when she smiled they laughed, clapping their hands. The odor of the dye of their bright cloths and of trade scent was all about her—a strange odor; their healthy bodies, their dark smooth skins, their dark bright eyes, their white teeth between their laughing brown lips, were strangely near her, in a great perfection of vigor and freedom. Her own image shone in their every eye. Only a mulattress, slim, with tawny hair and a golden skin, leaning against the cabin wall, was withdrawn from Lucy's successes. A small boy, very black, approached Lucy with a gift of pawpaws; the fruit, like yellow melons in a basket, he laid at her feet. And

presently all the bright fruits that had come aboard for the crew were heaped before Lucy.

Harford, passing by, was struck by the opulent aspect of that group of girls and fruit. Beauty moved him freshly, and he was released from a burden of care. The evening stole over the estuary of Gaboon—how infinitely sweet it was, with a remembered sweetness. With the failure of the sunlight the shore drew near; he saw the settlement beside the water,—that would be Glass,—and behind the plateau he saw the great trees by which mariners had laid their course for generations, as they would do for years to come. Like acorns fallen from great oaks were the little cabins of the settlements of Gaboon. His business with the captain must wait until the morning. He and Atemba gathered up the weary Lucy and her spoils, intimidating with their busy

ways the Mpongwe girls. The captain came to wish her farewell (Harford knew his thought—that she would not live the year out: "And a fine woman too, but hasn't an idea of the country"), and Lucy went over the side, laughing at the difficulties of the ladder, little knowing how she was observed through the captain's glass from the French ship that lay to leeward of the *Straw*. She would like it if she knew, thought Harford, when he was at leisure in the canoe.

The canoe was his own, and a fine one. It had been made for him in the year of his absence. The young captain of the crew of

six was his headman—a Fang. Harford had a liking for the forest tribes; his business, he hoped, would come more and more to be with them, and he had himself trained a group of Fang traders. No other trader had done so, and no other had set himself against the custom of trust that was so smooth a beginning and so inevitable a destruction of friendship. He told the Fang that the canoe was a good one and that he would be paid for it in the morning. They spoke together of the things of trade.

Lucy listened to that strange tongue; the canoers sang and paddled; the shadow of evening was in the water; her attention, weary with strain, drowsed, and they came to shore. Harford gave her a hand as she left the canoe. He thought to himself suddenly, "Never again to be the same!" He thought of the change that waits the white man in Africa—Lucy did not know of this

change. She left herself there in the canoe and did not know that it must be so. She gave herself to Africa without thought. She passed the little houses by the sea and did not know that these were now her town; she went up the steps to the door of Taylor's house and did not mark that it was a house with a verandah—a deck house. She was met by a desperate Taylor and did not guess that he was sick with excitement, or that he had never thought to see a formidable white woman there.

She accepted the poverty of that poor shelter as exceptional—she did not know that there was no better shelter within a month's journey. She did not see a woman's dress hanging on the rude plank wall of Taylor's bedroom, and she did not miss that dress when it was whisked away by a stricken Taylor. She sat at table on Taylor's verandah without thought of its fine red and white

checked cloth; spreading her wide white skirts, she leaned on her hand and looked out to sea, where three vessels hung their lights against the dusk—and she had no knowledge of the ageless intervals when there was no ship there to prick the evening with her lights.

The nostalgias of Taylor, pushed back into brief surcease, did not weigh upon the air. All went well, thought Taylor, and so it did. What an escape! What a day of escape, and a night! How long, he wondered vaguely, with his eyes upon Lucy. But he did not envy Harford—no, it would be too difficult. He thought of his Iwengosono, with her tawny hair and yellow eyes. She was going to have a baby, and perhaps it would be a black baby—he hoped she would keep well out of the way. Iveki, as good a steward as he could put his hand on, was serving at the table, Mpongwe hauteur

giving dignity to his crude fashion. There was palm oil and other country chop on the table; wine, too, and fine fruit. Behind Lucy stood Atemba, sunk in his own despair —as lost among the Mpongwe as he had been in the sea. Harford supposed that he must have seen the landfall with some hope of his own tribe and country.

With the hour the land breeze fell, and there was a stillness before the sea breeze should rise at eight o'clock; the hurricane lamp brimmed its circle of light, laving the faces that were half in shadow; the sea sighed; the plumes of the bamboo whispered; and in the dark about them—where there was a murmur of comment and laughter—were the curious who gathered to see the white people fresh from the sea. Harford heard the legato of the Mpongwe and the staccato of the Fang tongues. He wished to be seeing his own Fang, who had come

down the river in three canoes—they would be bedded near by in Taylor's compound, where they would be without doubt the butt of the fine Mpongwe. He rose, excusing himself. Taylor, in a panic, rose with him, and Lucy was left to look about that bamboo shelter where the white sand drifted on the gray plank of the floor.

Within a little room a bed was spread for her with a bright country cloth. A mirror, gray in a tarnished frame, gave back her image dimmed. Atemba held the lantern for her self-scrutiny, and he looked at himself without a smile. There was a great earthen basin and a jug of water; these were brightly flowered and bore the name of King Toko. The night came in at the windows, where there was no glass, only a shutter that Lucy barred and then threw open again, leaning out to feel against her cheek the stir of the sea breeze. And then, from the dark,

dark voices spoke to her softly; Iwengosono and her girl friends were watching her from the ground below the window. They admired her, speaking to her in Mpongwe, which certainly she did not understand; but they saw her smiling in the lamplight. They laughed, and would have come in to her, but the voice of an old woman spoke sharply, and they went away.

Lucy sighed with pleasure. She felt herself deliciously free of the ship; she could not be still in that empty room, and she passionately desired to be abroad. Atemba followed her, the lantern swinging at his knee. She smelt the frangipani that blossoms in beach settlements, and the odor of wood fires. Taylor's little house stood in a trodden clearing surrounded by a brush fence. Beyond this there was a camp ground; the sound of laughter and of drumming came from this compound.

Through a breach in the stockade Lucy saw Africa at play—dark bodies leaping to incredibly accurate rhythms, dark voices joining in an unintelligible phrase and recurrent sudden shout. There were a hundred people there, and on the ground the blaze of twenty fires; there was such a freedom as Lucy had not known. A long time she watched those free people eddying in a dance without logic, struck with firelight and with moonlight. Harford, coming back with Taylor, found her there, Atemba beside her; he drew her with him to the house; he was struck by a lack of focus in her dazzled eyes. She had not complained of the heat—Harford was to find her uncomplaining.

Three days later, in the canoe that pointed upriver, he heard her join the Fang paddlers in their boat song. The Fang shouted with laughter; singing the songs of free men,

they shot past the old barracoon. The estuary was clean silver over its whole expanse, and without a sail, the slaves having been loaded in the night and the ships having cleared before dawn. Harford's ten canoes of barter trailed the canoe of the "Big Massa," who was richer now, the Fang told each other, by a woman. A fine woman, bought with a great price, surely. And much goods besides, in his many canoes.

BOOK TWO

THE FACTORY

Chapter One

HARFORD SETTLED INTO THE CANVAS chair that so neatly fitted the sides of his canoe; he savored the morning air of the journey with intense appreciation. He had such a passion for the forests of Africa as he could never have acknowledged, and when his little fleet left the open water for the glassy surface of the Nkomo River he was struck to

the heart with a pang of delight. Here the mangrove trees were a hedge about the great park of the forest; the tide was near the full. On a full tide the canoes came to be amid high ground, the mangroves were great trees; in that narrower way the first lustre of the day was lost; the singing ceased, and Harford recognized the familiar rhythm of the journey.

He returned from his solitary excursions to the thought of Lucy's probable miseries during the furies of the day, when the sunlight would flow like a river above the brown water, when with the turn of the tide the obscene roots of the mangrove trees would stand above the slime gnarled with oysters, when the débris of the flood delayed in the ooze would give off the odor of Africa, and the great heat would press upon the canoers in their hollowed tree.

Lucy sat in a canvas chair before him;

he saw the back of her wide straw bonnet and her skirts crushed into the narrow compass of the canoe. She bit a pencil and wrote on a pad upon her knee. Every crocodile sprawling on a stone amid-stream and slipping like spilled water back into the flood was a wonder to her. The sinister green lip turned by the brown water against the paddle delighted her. Now and again, when a monkey spread himself like an arabesque, small against the wall of the forest, the paddlers pointed to it, responsive to her zest. She immortalized the monkey then and there with a fine phrase; she wrote about the great and awful forest, the majestic river, the noble savages that bent to the oar. And suddenly she drooped under the sunlight that thrust a wedge between the dark shadows of the river banks. Harford called a halt at the village of Zamaliga. The

canoes turned into a bywater that led to the invisible village.

Through a green tunnel of forest they came to a muddy ooze left by the tide below the bank of Zamaliga. Seven men came out of the village stockade; leaning on their spears, they observed the canoes. Those paddlers who were of the clan of the inhabitants of Zamaliga shouted to them, and the villagers, with a marked and lofty deliberation, stepped out into the ooze. They drew up the canoes; one of them lifted Lucy from her chair and set her carefully on the high ground. He left a yellow stain of palm oil on her dress. The forest shed a green stain on her. Her skirts, spread over her hoops, were too wide to pass the narrow way that entered the village; those who watched the strangers through the gun holes in the walls of the headman's house saw her remove her cage of reeds—her laughter woke the village

of Zamaliga. Lucy passed into the rectangular clearing, so mediæval in its aspect, of the long narrow village, where she burst upon the vision of the old headman who had come out to greet the white man. From each of the little huts, so low under their cover of palm thatch, a leg was thrust, a head, and a body followed; the clearing, full of sunlight between the walls of the forest, was suddenly stirring with brown bodies. There was a shout from end to end of the village, and a question—was it a lad or a woman?

Lucy, weak with laughter, stooped to the entrance and drew her skirts after her into the headman's house. The headman observed her gravely; he saw the Big Massa spread a grass mat upon a bamboo bed. The woman—for he was assured by the rowers, some of whom were his own people, that this was a woman—lay laughing in the

cool gloom of his house. "She is strong for talk," he told himself. He went out under the eaves where he kept his call drum and beat a message summoning his women from their outlying gardens—these people must be fed, he knew. "There are strangers in the village," cried out the beaten drum. The headman would have liked to inform his neighboring headmen of the wonder of his guests, but there was no phrase in the old drum code that was adequate for this novelty of a white woman, lying in the palaver house of the village, laughing and chattering.

Lucy looked at the rafters; they were studded with little plaintive skulls of animals, brown and varnished with smoke—reminders of the hunt. She saw the fetish images, like dolls, seated on high standing drums in the corner; she averted her eyes from their obscene gestures and their curiously vital and significant faces. The shock

of their vitality was without meaning to her. The clutter in the hut, of spears and guns and dogs and hunting nets, did not arrest her. The sound of drums, the heavy air in that brown interior, the warm thick peanut porridge that Atemba brought her and that Harford bade her eat with the bread from her basket, presently made her drowsy, and she slept, lulled by the crowd and the chatter.

The square of golden light that opened on the street was darkened by grave and curious faces; one and then another body entered, the men breeched with bark cloth, the women with bustles of dried grasses. They held their bustles against their thighs as they put their legs over the high threshold. Their heads were dressed with feathers and with disks of brass. They were entirely preoccupied with their scrutiny of Lucy pale in sleep; they understood that this was the

white man's woman; they would have rejoiced to see her without the many complications of her coverings, which yet were much to be coveted. Their murmurs in Fang were anatomical in trend; Harford heard them. He wondered to find himself standing guard over a wife in a Fang palaver house, and he greatly wondered to see her sleep there like a veteran.

That night Lucy slept in the bottom of the canoe. The river ran among hills; there was a mist above the river, and a moon gilded the mist. Harford dozed in his chair; the rowers in shifts made against the current; passing canoes hailed them and were hailed again—the word of Hallifodi's white woman went up and down the river and women in villages Lucy was never to see spoke of her daily for many days. The articulate curiosity of the women of the tribes of that river did much to stimulate

Harford's trade in those first months of his trading. Through his sleep Harford heard his rowers sing a ballad of the white man and his white woman:—

"*Hé-yé-é!* Her eyes are like the eyes of the wood dove!
Hé-yé-é!
Her hair is soft like the hair of the monkey!
Hé-yé-é!
Her husband crossed in a canoe to get her!
Hé-yé-é!
And to her father her husband gave an ivory!
Hé-yé-é!
An ivory as big as your thigh, O Hallifodi!
Hé-yé-é!

Chapter Two

ON THE THIRD DAY LUCY WOKE VERY early in the gray dawn. In the pallor of the morning, and dark against the pale stream of the sky, the trees were full of the furious contention of parrots. That matinal domestic disorder startled her; she could not think where she was that there should be a river of sky above her and her face wet with

dew. There was Harford, and his face was not set toward her. The canoe floated toward a landing, a little jetty of logs thrown out against the stream. Trees hung about the water; the river might have been a little lake. A great rectangular clearing was a breach in the forest—the walls of the forest stood sheer about four or five acres of cleared ground that sloped to the river. Along the bank and not more than fifty feet from the water's edge there was a square high stockade. Above this, and on the upper stretch of the clearing where the slope of ground was easy, there was a cabin in a compound with a withy fence about it—this was Harford's house and factory.

Lucy saw that her husband stared at the lower stockade; he stood in the canoe still staring; he wavered and sat down. He asked a question of his headman, who told him that this was De Sopo's barracoon, built

in the last dry season; that De Sopo had sent his slaves away by canoes that made one of the Spanish ships.

The barracoon was empty, but the scent of it still hung on the air. Harford was surprised and disheartened; all his plotted future darkened and lost its zest; his distaste for the Trade turned then and there to loathing, and his pleasure in clean barter—which had attracted him as an experiment and a venture—seemed to him now a childish dream, doomed to fail. He could have overturned the canoe in his spleen, but there was Lucy ready to stir herself, to ask her million questions, and to laugh in the face of Africa.

He did not tell her that the barracoon had been built in his absence; he looked at her harshly, begging her to remember that she was in a canoe, and not be throwing herself about. Lucy laughed. She hung on

her husband's arm, climbing the slope of the hill on the little footpath that skirted the clearing and that was too narrow. It was still dark in the forest, and a smell of mold as old as time seeped through that enormous wall.

"Is it not strange, Mr. Harford," Lucy asked him, "that I, who was born in a city and lived in Newport all my life, should have my own first home in such a wild and lonely place? Is it not romantic?" Her husband did not answer her—he was looking grimly at his "factory."

The little cabin, built on stilts and made of wide plates of the bark of trees, stood with its eyes shut in the clearing. Yellow ground was beaten hard about it. At the foot of the stairs that led to the verandah an old Fang caretaker with a broom of twigs was sweeping away what was not there—his Big Massa must see for himself

that Ntu Ela swept always and forever the ground that was his care. From one of the lesser cabins behind the factory Harford's carpenter came out to greet him; he was a mulatto from the Gold Coast. He told his wife later that his breath had gone straight away from his body at the sight of the white woman.

The door of the cabin was painted green —a green door! And not another in a thousand miles. Nor any other stairs in that forest. The carpenter who had made the stairs could make anything; he began at first glimpse of Lucy to devise a dress for his wife—wide like Lucy's. He opened the door of the house; in the trade room there were shelves, empty now, and a long counter. He threw back the wooden shutters; he had made these too, and admired them greatly. Off the trade room a door opened to a smaller room. Lucy saw there

a slatted wooden bed, and against the wall three wooden boxes laid one above the other; she knew them for shelves, and her mind, weary with wandering among the strange things of the forest, came to rest in that room. Harford could not have guessed how much it was for her a nest. She would not see the house for the poor bleak thing it was—she curtained it and carpeted it and furnished it, and all in the moment the carpenter took to show Harford the bar he had put across the door that opened to the storehouse behind the counter. By a crazy mirror on the trade-room wall she smoothed her hair—laughing at the broken face it gave her.

Harford, standing under the eaves of the house he had thought to live in by himself and where he had thought to be the only trader, looked down the hill and into the barracoon—he could see it plainly. The

high stockade of trimmed and sharpened staves was empty now, the ashes of its many little fires cold on the ground. He communed with himself; his wife, calling him, woke him to a forgotten presence. He saw her freshly against the background of the place to which he had brought her: her hardihood and vigor struck him, and it came into his mind that she was a singularly fearless woman. He remembered her lying asleep under the mists and the moonlight in the bottom of the canoe—impressing upon his inattentive memory an indestructible image, more beautiful than she had seemed to be.

They sat at a table on the verandah. Atemba, having mysteriously achieved a checkered cloth of red and white, served them, as he had learned to do, with what food was to be had, and the acquired arts of Taylor's steward. Behind the constant

fabric of Lucy's chatter Harford heard the drums of the neighboring villages. Up and down and across the river, in villages under the cover of the forest, the Fang were drumming out the news that Hallifodi had come back with much goods for barter. Noon, he knew, would find his yard full of his neighbors. Up the path from the river, as his men brought his canoes alongside, others of them carried his bales of cotton, his bales of dried fish, his cases of rum. The great busyness of trade began to furnish his clearing with clamor, with odor, with humanity. Fortified by food and entirely engrossed in the disposal of his goods and the greetings of the headmen who pressed upon him, he was suddenly happy after his own fashion.

Harford was a born trader. He spoke the language of those with whom he traded; he had observed and he practised their customs in trading; he knew their tempo and

was neither too swift nor too slow in his greetings and his bargains; he was habitually grave, but he had a reserve of sardonic humor which came into service at a moment accurately timed and effective. He was severe. For these traits he was well liked, and he was not disliked for his moody humors.

The old tattooed shrewd Fang headmen came to greet him now in their patriarchal groups, accompanied by young men beating drums, and young men carrying spears, and keepers of dogs in leashes of three, and women with painted headdresses whose bustles were painted, too. All these people welcomed him, not alone because he was the purveyor of extraordinary novelties, but because they liked him. Was he not their father, returned from paths upon the sea? And had he not passed over the tribe of the arrogant Mpongwe, defying the old

Mpongwe taboo that none should trade with the Fang but a son of a beach tribe?

They were consumed with a passion of curiosity about Lucy. Looking at her, they sighed with wonder, snapped their fingers, and slapped their thighs; she saw herself in all those brilliant eyes, adequately mirrored and approved. Chickens were brought to Hallifodi, tied by their feet and hanging head down; fish in green leaf packets were diverted from the cooking pot; eggs—because white men like eggs—were taken from under outraged hens; corn, peanuts, hands of bananas, honey in gourds, wild fruits of the forest—all these were brought, and not without a mingling of reluctance and calculation, to please their white man.

The trade goods were under cover before night; a Fang youth taught by Harford to keep tally had this tally ready, and it was correct. The key was turned on the heaped

disorder of the storeroom; the canoe men, who would come for their pay in the morning, wandered off to the villages where they would eat and sleep; the guests, still sighing with acclamation, went away in their tribal groups.

It was cool in the empty clearing. Harford sat on the steps of his house, which looked west, smoking his pipe, dressed once again in no more than a shirt and trousers. Atemba brought good Fang chop to the red and white tablecloth. Lucy, pale with a long day of effort and minus her hoops, was too bewildered and weary to speak, and peace fell upon that little group—so small, so dominant, and so lost in the forest. The dark settled in, and Atemba lit a lantern. Lucy leaned her head on her hand—she was devising a dress that would fit the circumstance. Harford was half asleep when his wife told him that their bed was ready; he

had not thought to find a hammock for himself among the loads, and he lay down beside Lucy in the small dark room where he had bunked in times past, and which was already furnished by his wife's undisciplined presence. He felt a movement of tenderness for her fatigue, her innocent trust and courage, her facile abandonment and passion. But when she slept and moonlight fell upon her white arms and her bundles of dark hair, and her clothing hung in billows against the wall, he was oppressed; he rose and went out.

The shadow of his house was black under a blazing moon; silver struck the plumes of the banana trees that stood about his clearing; to the west and down the hill the river wore its veil of mist, and white in the moonlight was the empty yard of the barracoon. He stretched himself in his old canvas chair. The river was audible, and from

the villages came the incessant trouble of the dance drums. His circumstance was perfectly familiar to him; nothing of it claimed his attention; every element in it released the man in him that Africa had made in fifteen years.

He thought of De Sopo as he had known him five years before; the two of them were then in the Trade, Harford with a firm of New Yorkers—the last of slave trading for him. De Sopo had been with a group of Portuguese, dealing directly with Bahia. These operations had been off the Muni River, which was then little visited by the British Patrol. De Sopo should be in his early thirties now—grown perhaps, Harford thought to himself, a tricky and a dirty fellow. He would be upriver now, dealing with his slaving chiefs; doubtless he would expect to be lodged when he should come down to his barracoon and while he was

holding his kaffle for shipment. Taylor had spoken of De Sopo as shipping with him, but Harford had not thought to ask where the Portuguese held his slaves. None of the Fang had spoken of the barracoon; it might be, as Harford knew, that they supposed De Sopo to be a partner with himself. He had spent a year in making his clearing and in building his houses, in establishing his trade among the Fang, and in that time he had not bought a slave, though many had been offered him. But the Fang would not so easily disassociate a white man from the Trade, and he must take his measures before De Sopo returned with his new cargo. He considered abandoning this clearing for another, turning over in his mind the locality as he knew it. But he came to the conclusion that he must dispose of his stock before coming to a decision. And he slept under the shadow of his eaves.

Chapter Three

THE SOUTHERN CROSS LEANED TO ITS SETTING. It was the month of March; the rainy season was near. In the villages the people were making a charm for the felling of trees. Soon Tolo, the constellation of the Hare, would incline to the roofs of the houses in the early dark—then the sons of the Fang would burn the trees they had

felled to make their new gardens. Their women would plant the seed, and all the things of man known from the birth of men would go forward. Yet there were these new things in the forest—a trader who did not barter for slaves, and a white woman. Strange things, not to be explained.

On a day soon after Efa Ngoto, with a small company of his young men, came to

Harford with a slave. The fame of Harford's goods was irresistible. Efa had no ivory, but he had a girl who had been left in pawn with him by a friend who was now an enemy. She was not a tractable girl—she was given, rather, to audible rehearsals of her irregular position and her grievances. Harford, leaning on the rail of his verandah, heard the account of her virtues as a fine working woman, obedient, sure to breed, for she had done so. He listened to Efa's offer of exchange for the customary tale of goods. He waited with his acquired and admirable patience until Efa had come to an end of oratory and flourishing of his staff. The girl, drawn forward by a bamboo noose about her neck, leaned back against it. Lucy arrived to exclaim and question—and little did she guess how her husband cursed in his heart these rifts in an established con-

tact, based on understood intonations and intervals.

"When the sun is in the middle," Harford told Efa, "I shall call upon the drum all real men of the forest. And when they shall have gathered in answer to my drumming I shall tell them the way and the kind of my trade—what I shall buy of the tribe of the Fang. Return then with your brothers."

At five o'clock of that afternoon Harford's clearing was filled with headmen and lesser men; with dogs and dog bells; with spears, staves, and guns; with headdresses painted green, yellow, white, strung with beads, studded with shells, buttons, and brass; with bodies painted with clay, with ochre, and with the crimson powder of the camwood tree; with bodies breeched in bark cloth, naked bodies, and bodies striding in leopard skins.

Lucy on the verandah was perfectly silent because Harford had begged her to be so; she put a little parasol between her face and the setting sun and was the more observed for this. She admired her husband deeply, approving the silence with which the noisy crowd attended him when he rose to speak. She could not know what he was saying, but she saw him call for the slave girl who had returned with Efa, and who was drawn by the leash into the center of the group. The girl hung back, intimidated for the moment by the public eye. Harford untied the cord about her neck, telling Efa Ngoto that there—so far as he was concerned—stood every slave girl that was brought him for purchase.

"I will give you for your ivories," he told them, "the right count of goods for an ivory, and all the goods fine. But do not wake me in the night to sell me a slave, thinking,

'He is a man who will not buy a slave in the daytime, but when night comes he will buy a slave.' Do not call me in the morning to sell me a woman who has run away at night and whom with the dawn you have overtaken saying to her, 'Aha, you who run away! I shall take you to the white man, and try running away from him!' Do not hasten back from your quarrels with your enemy tribes bringing young men with you, thinking that I will buy them. Never on any day, rainy season or dry, will I buy a slave from you; and any slave that you bring to my factory in bonds I shall unloose with my own hand and you may deal as you can with the one that stands free. As for your own slaves that you have in your own towns, deal with them after your own fashion—what have I to do with them? Have you heard?"

"We have heard!" The automatic re-

sponse in its unison and volume startled Lucy, unused to these conventions. A chief rose to ask—what of the barracoon that the white man had built at the foot of the hill and that he had already filled with two fillings of slaves? How were they to understand a tribe of men that both did and did not deal in slaves?

Of white men, as of black men, Harford told them, there are tribes and tribes, customs and customs. De Sopo was of a slaving tribe. For himself, whose name was Hallifodi and who had been a slaver in his youth, there was now a strong, unbreakable, and permanent taboo without end—he would not slave.

"It is for him taboo!"

Harford knew suddenly that he had said the inevitable, convincing, and last word; he was for the Fang disestablished as a slaver, and that by the logic of a word. His hu-

manity was, moreover, established, for was he not a man with a taboo? A small square bottle of rum went by the hand of Atemba to the hand of every headman, and the palaver was done. In clannish groups and with many words of farewell and of begging, the Fang went away from the clearing. Harford was well pleased and happily complacent; he rehearsed his speech in part to Lucy, but he did not tell her what he had said when he loosed the rope on the neck of the Fang girl, and Lucy did not know then, or ever, that her husband was a man with a taboo. But Atemba heard, and understood, and he saw the girl released.

Chapter Four

LUCY HAD NOT WORN OUT HER FIRST PAIR of kid shoes when the first rains fell. Harford had put her in a little cabin of one room, built for herself and removed from the smell of salt fish and the constant coming and going of the Fang. Curtains hung at the windows, native mats woven of grass were laid on the floor, and this was made

of planks that Harford had had brought up-river. The rough little house, with its thatch of palm mats, its rude shutters, and its green door, delighted Lucy beyond reason; it preoccupied her; she saw it as exiles see their shelters that are achieved at strange expense. She felt for it a mystic attachment that was the beginning in her of the inevitable action of African exile. At night on her slatted bamboo bed in the dark she saw in her mind her little house flooded with light and she rejoiced in all its least arrangement.

Her delight in it was shared by the Fang women who hung about the steps and who saw it after their own fashion and with an excessive admiration. They appropriated to themselves Lucy, on the score of their common sex, and her house as the house of a woman; their innate hardihood overcame their timidity; with a growing boldness they

flocked to the spectacle of the white woman with her long hair, her slim waist, her mincing airs that amused them, her excess of clothes that became a legend. Groups of them standing on the ground before her house would summon her in their loud laughing voices; they would question her in the modified tender idiom that the Fang people reserve for children, and her answers in their own tongue, imperfect and halting, pleased them, increasing in them the conviction that she was a child and the legitimate object of their facile maternal solicitude.

Harford, busy with his own affairs, would be roused by their shouts of laughter, and would look out to wonder at the sight of his wife, in a white dress without hoops, leaning over the rail of her little verandah into a group of the dark bodies of women —tattooed, oiled, painted, turning up to her their faces all smiling and lit with a tender

amusement. Their certain uncouthness, their obvious diseases, the known suspicion of cannibalism that hung about the tribe, seemed then to be overlaid by an affinity between women, powerful and touching.

The first rains had not fallen before Lucy ventured into the nearer villages, following Atemba along the tunneled paths of the forest that debouched from a green gloom into the intolerable light of the clearings. A wooden stool would be set for her in one and another of the huts of the village; the clay floor would be swept in her honor; warm curiosities would play about her. Daintily she would taste from a folded leaf the mushroom soup or the fish stew that was the best of the village fare. The headman, getting word of this, would saunter down the clearing to put his head in under the eaves of the favored house, to wonder and laugh at the sight of her; and her personal impor-

tance, somehow slipping away, would re-establish itself and would embellish her.

She would come back from these excursions with extravagant talk of the charms of Fang babies, and smelling of the fires that burn on the floors of Fang cabins. And she began to write romantically about her life in the forest. Harford, going about the clearing, would see her sitting at a table she had made of boxes; he knew, he thought, the sort of thing she would be writing—remembering the book of hers that he had read before he met her. He had admired it, liking an authoress to be romantic and sentimental. He remembered that he had read it in a lonely deserted fort on the Gold Coast, sitting in a large, dusty, and empty room, reading Lucy's impossible tale in a small pool of light from a lantern. He had got it from the captain of a ship out of Boston. Life had been at the slack with

him then, between two adventures. It was small time he had to be reading now, for his trade was going well, ivory was coming in, was being weighed and sent down the river to Taylor. The Fang of the river valley—the headmen and their favorite wives—were decked in the colored calicoes of his trading; they were drinking his rum and eating his salt fish in all the villages; matches were struck in huts where the fire stick had been the only use; fishhooks were betraying the fish in the river, and gunpowder from Hallifodi furnished the horns of the hunters. Gifted cheats were busy devising ways to overreach him, and he was divining their villainy; all was as it should be in the factory of Hallifodi on the Nkomo River.

A leopard stole a goat that Lucy had meant to milk; Harford had a fever and resented his wife's care; a thief was found

to be digging through the ground below the level of the storehouse where Harford kept his reserves; and Atemba was snake-bitten. But Atemba recovered, Harford recovered, the thief was apprehended and put over the log—Harford calling upon the headman of the recreant's own town to beat him. Only Lucy did not entirely recover from the wound of her husband's ill-humored and morose convalescence, when he had shut his door against her, begging her to send Atemba to serve him. She had then wept bitterly and had written a letter home—speaking of the great loneliness of her life and the unlikeness between men and women in their characters and habits. And indeed it would seem that she was right, for when she sickened with the fever, as she presently did, she accepted her husband's ministrations gratefully, and wrote about them at length in another letter and another vein.

It is not strange, therefore, that Lucy's friends were later divided in their understanding of Harford's character and conduct.

With the passing of time and the falling of the rain, Lucy's letters ceased. Atemba, who was fascinated by the travels of her hand upon the page and by the marks she made, felt aggrieved; her ink, he told her, was drying. He begged her to teach him to write, and so for a little time she did; Harford would see Atemba's face happy and intent above his slow-traveling hand. But Lucy wearied of the teaching; a languor grew upon her in that small house which was shut in by the dark walls of the rain. Atemba thought, "She should visit her father's town." She complained to Harford of the roaches, of the rats that rustled in the leaf thatch of her cabin. There were a hundred roaches on her wall of an evening,

she said, and the rats carried away her stockings. She sickened of the daily fare and lost her zest for invention. At the height of the rainy season, when the great rains swept daily through the clearing and fell enormously on the roof, she had black-water fever, and for two nights Harford tended her without hope. On the third night he slept; there was no lantern lit in the white man's clearing, and Lucy, convalescent, lay in the sinister trough of a gray weakness, watching the moonlight on her bark wall.

It was a grievance with her, after this illness, that she had lost track of the days of the week and could not be sure again if it were Sunday or another day. Incessantly she struggled with this problem, calling on Harford to solve it for her—endlessly tracing her way back to a known day and baffled always by her weakness. But with the dry season she forgot this and other obses-

sions; the falling of the sunlight among the last light veils of rain flooded her with joy, and she came back to her housewifery and her visits in the villages.

It began to appear to Harford that her recurrent fevers were anticipated by an increase in her vitality—she would then be restless and her initiative would revive; she would go nutting with the Fang women in the forest or swimming in the river to the sound of their joyous cries. He grew to dread these adventures and her returns from them. Lucy dragging her skirts in from a native village, her hair smelling of wood smoke and her eyes already shadowed with illness, was a provocation to Harford; he felt a strangeness in her and his face was set against her. But Lucy pale and listless, recovering from her fever, following after him for company and in gratitude for his care of her, touched him; he softened. He

could then suffer it that she loved him devotedly. He was grateful to her that she spoke less often; he would find it in his heart to talk with her, recounting the day's business and the gossip of the neighborhood, and Lucy would listen in a happy languor.

Chapter Five

HARFORD WAS A CAREFUL MASTER AND his clearing was well ordered—a white man might come upon it unannounced and there would be no scurry there to shame the factor. But no white man came until, on a day in January, De Sopo arrived in a canoe and was at the door of the factory before he was observed.

It was noon. Lucy and Harford sat at table under the eaves of the factory. Lucy, when she saw a white face, felt such a surprise as was painful; she put her hand to her hair and smoothed her dress; she remembered the holes in her shoes and that her skirt was short after a fashion she had devised for her isolated circumstance. She was pale and intimidated, letting her husband do the honors, and these Harford extended without zeal. With the lapse of time he had ceased to take account of De Sopo; Mpongwe traders in passing had told him that the Spaniard was in his own town beyond the sea; and latterly Harford had heard that he was operating in the Muni River, as the dangers of the Trade were now excessive in the Gaboon estuary. The barracoon, so long idle, had ceased to spoil Harford's every prospect; grass had grown on the floor of it, and the roofs of the thatch

shelter that ran along the inner wall were falling under the weight of sweet-potato vine. It was a deserted clearing, soon to revert to forest.

And here at the door was De Sopo.

He was thinner than Harford remembered him to be, of a bad color, and nearly bald. His manner, Harford was bound to agree, was correct. He had heard from his paddlers that Harford had a woman, and he had supposed this to be a Mpongwe woman, such as he himself had. She was with him now; coming in on his heels, she spread out for him a deerskin stool she carried, and then stood against the wall. She was a dark creature, slight and round, without a trace of tattoo, her hair without beads and pinned with a gold ornament; her square of cloth, violet-colored and bordered with red, was tautened under her arms. Harford wondered where De Sopo had got

a girl of her quality. Atemba, who was bringing food to De Sopo, observed her and was by her observed. Only Lucy, looking at her with great pleasure, did not know that she was De Sopo's woman; she did not understand why De Sopo, presently, and when he had found himself in a family, sent her away. She went away down the steps into the violent light of the clearing and down the path to the canoe; but Harford sent Atemba after her to bring her back into the hut of the headman's wife, where she would be fed—if indeed she would eat the food of a Fang woman. Lucy watched the two black people, single file, stride away with an African elegance.

De Sopo, who spoke to Harford in Spanish, spoke to Lucy in beach English, and the corruption of this speech offended her. She made little out of his assurances that he "catch plenty nigger, fine too much, never

die for canoe, never kill him for gun, make fine journey two-three moons, keep him now ship live for come. Catch him ship plenty quick." She did not understand when he offered her a fine girl pickaninny, half grown. And later when he went away, and when she would have asked Harford her thousand questions,—the tides of her vitality having risen under excitement,—he was moody and taciturn. He followed De Sopo down to the river, and told him that he could not have him in the house. The Spaniard must sleep in the villages until he should have a shelter of his own.

De Sopo was not of an ill humor—he did not resent his expulsion from a domesticity so remote from his own experience and so unexpected; he gave small attention to Harford's schemes for an unnatural and emasculated trade; he congratulated him elaborately on his marriage with a lady so

evidently illustrious, so beautiful, so gracious, and he trusted that his presence in the neighborhood, and the presence of his slaves, would not be offensive. He had got his girl from a partner who had died in the interior, with whom he had been making his way from the upper reaches of the Muni River to the Nkomo. A hard country to travel until they struck the navigable river, by which time his partner had died. De Sopo had missed the aid of a partner, but his slaves—who were a half day behind him—were a poor-spirited lot and amenable to his Benga overseers. Harford was disarmed more than he had thought to be; they parted on a civil note.

Chapter Six

"I COULD NOT HAVE HIM HERE," HE TOLD Lucy that night, "as he had hoped to be—both on your account and on my own, because of the reputation I am earning for another sort of trade. But I should like him sometimes to come to see us, unless that would displease you."

Lucy had not dealt with the matter of

De Sopo so definitely; she would have been led in any case by Harford. The girl, Harford told her, was doubtless lonely. She had belonged to another man; De Sopo hardly could be attractive to a beautiful girl like that—though it was strange, he said, how now and again you found a girl who seemed to form such an attachment.

Lucy lay upon her bed, watching Harford move about the room. A silence followed this comment; he saw Lucy perfectly still, her breath suspended, looking at him with a child's amazement. The girl—what was she to De Sopo?

"She is his woman," Harford told her reasonably, but a flood of sympathy filled him when he saw her struggle with this. "It is natural," he told her; "he is a man alone, living in dreary places, and she is a woman, clean, clever—she looks clever—she gives him pleasure—it is customary." Harford

felt his way along, and Lucy turned to stone.

"Customary," Lucy murmured; and then she breathed her question into the silence where Harford had felt, curiously enough, so safe:—

"Did you?"

"Yes," said Harford, looking at her without dissimulation; and he had more to say, but she turned to the wall. He waited until his words had sunk back into his heart, and he went away.

Atemba was sitting under the eaves of one of the cabins, and Harford sent him down in the moonlight to invite De Sopo for a drink. The moments dragged until he came. Harford felt a need of masculine conversation; it was almost with relief that he heard the account of the capture of the slaves, who were all war captives, the Fang having raided the villages of the Makae.

De Sopo had been gathering food for them on his way down the river; he was expecting old Otolo and his people to bring in several canoe loads of plantain and cassava before the noonday; he had ten hunters out for game, and what rice he had was already under cover—"though the niggers of these parts will not eat rice unless they are starving." But with all he could do by way of provision either out of his own stock or by purchase from the Fang, he felt a shortage. He had been a long time coming overland, and the Fang by the way had been grudging of their food, seeing that the slaves were Makae. He hoped that Harford had rice and salt to spare, else he would have to go down the river to Taylor, as he had rice for no more than a week, and while he expected news of the *Arrow* within that time, there was no certainty, as Harford knew. And he wondered whether Harford would be

able, when the time of shipment came, to lend him five or six canoes.

Harford sighed with irritation; he assured De Sopo that he must not look to him for any help, as his equipment was no more than adequate for his own needs, and he was concerned that the Fang should not have occasion to associate him with any other trade than his own. De Sopo amiably agreed; the idiosyncrasies of his companion were curious, and might perhaps be explained as the Fang were explaining them. Old Orolo had told De Sopo that Hallifodi had a strong taboo and must not trade in slaves. De Sopo had acquired some taboos himself; he could only be grateful that these were minor and not of a nature to interfere with business. He was glad of Harford's presence in the neighborhood, for the barracoon was not of the best, having been hastily made, without proper stronghold; he

knew that the presence of a white man's factory would intimidate the slaves, and this, in default of his dead partner, was an end much to be desired. They were in poor shape, he told Harford, having suffered from the journey.

The two men remembered old times—days of youth, captains of ships, old and fantastic headmen; traders and their adventures, their girls, their deaths, the fates of their half-breed children, were remembered until the moon was low and De Sopo must go back to his cabin in the village that was nearest the barracoon. The slaves, he said, should be coming along in the morning. He had a crew of Benga men with them, an armed man to a canoe, and that was not enough.

He went down to the clearing, his shadow, with its broad hat, black behind him. Harford marked how thin the Spaniard was—

as he had already marked his pallor. De Sopo walked like a man without a care in the world. As for himself—he looked about his clearing where his goods were stored and his crew of Fang were sleeping, to the cabin where his wife lay and where a light still shone at the window, and he felt a kind of envy of homeless, reckless, disreputable vagabonds.

With the dawn there came a wailing on the river; Harford wakened to the sound and wondered that De Sopo would put up with it—he should be able, Harford thought, to control the wailing of his slaves. The wailing grew as the canoes multiplied at the landing—the high desolate wailing that is the voice of the sorrows of Africa. That rhythmic crying presently filled the river valley. The devil must have a million of them, Harford thought. And he heard a sobbing at the door of the factory—thinking

it a strange thing, until he knew it to be Lucy. She fell against him sobbing; she could not get her breath to ask him what it was she heard, and her terror released in him a fresh sense of the authentic anguish of the wailing. He took her to his bed and warmed her, soothing her; he gave her brandy that she took with a child's obedience, sobbing as she put her lip against the cup. He lay beside her, telling her that she must be reassured, that it was the slaves come down the river into the barracoon. And when he was done, the sound of wailing filled the room; his wife wept against him. Neither of them ever spoke again of the union of black girls and white men.

BOOK THREE

THE BARRACOON

Chapter One

WITH THE MORNING THERE WAS SILENCE in the river valley. The clearing between the walls of the barracoon was alive with human activities; above the thatch which roofed the lean-to that ran along the inner walls smoke rose; fires burned here and there in the compound, and pots were on the fires. Harford could see, with

his eye to his spy-glass, all that remembered routine of the encampment waiting shipment; he noted that the slaves were ill-fed, and he thought, in view of the disrepair of the stockade, that this was a good thing. The lot was mixed in age and sex, though women were in the majority, as is customary among captives of tribal wars. The men were chained in pairs, but the women were not shackled.

When he put his glass down Lucy picked it up. She was not expert in its use, and into the frame of its single round there swung the green wall of the forest across the river, where, among the branches of a tree in flower, a golden snake imperceptibly drew its length. She lowered the glass; there was a canoe, brown on the brown flood of the river. Bracing the barrel of the glass against a stanchion of the verandah, she found the range of the barracoon and she

caught her breath. On that day, and on the days that followed, for hour after hour she inspected the barracoon.

Harford's attention was eventually caught; he watched her, wondering at her concentration. He saw the glass, shifted delicately, rake the sunny open and the shadows under the thatch of the long roof. He saw that Lucy was pale and that she leaned against the stanchion, but she would not be dissuaded. "I see them living," she told her husband when he asked her what was there. And was again absorbed.

The slaves were ten days in the barracoon before Harford forbade Lucy the use of the spyglass. He had been away overnight, little as he liked to leave his wife alone at the factory; but he trusted Atemba, and he took advantage of the presence of De Sopo, knowing that the Spaniard was within hail. He returned light-hearted, with three ivories

bought from under the bamboo bed of a difficult old headman. His carriers sang as they came out of the forest path into the factory clearing; Harford thought that Lucy would be hearing them, and glad of his return. But Lucy, in the blaze of the afternoon sun, was on the verandah, looking through the glass. Harford was on the steps before she took account of him. The degree of her preoccupation repelled him; her dress was disordered and her hair unkempt; their greetings were brief. She returned to her post at the stanchion, and pointed her glass again with a practised hand.

Atemba brought him his food, and Lucy did not join him. Harford observed her from where he sat at table behind the bamboo screen that shaded the north end of the little verandah—it came into his mind that she might be ill. He bade her go to the

shade of her room, and this she did, but with reluctance. Later in the afternoon she came to him where he was alone in the musty gloom of the storehouse; she was then hysterical—telling him that she could not bear her life and must get away. He turned from the shelves where he was going over his bales of calico. "This," he thought, "is nostalgia"—and he thought himself to be overtaken by the difficulties he had foreseen from the first day of his marriage. She said again that she must get away, and she wrung her hands. He considered her seriously; he told her that when he had finished with an ivory deal now pending with Efa Ngoto they would take a holiday down the river—though he sighed when he said this, and did not see his way clear. "It will be a long time, perhaps," he told her, and said that she must not count on it.

Lucy turned her back and leaned her

forehead on the door jamb; he felt her struggle to control her voice. "It is the slaves," she said. "I can't—I can't—Mr. Harford, the children—" But she could not bring herself to tell him more.

He drew her out of the storeroom; with his habit of caution he paused to lock the door. Going to the verandah, he trained the glass on the barracoon. He must see for himself what it was that so possessed his wife—though it was a fever in the making, he told himself. He swept his eye about that clearing, full of late afternoon sunlight and of slaves. The accommodations were certainly not of the best—De Sopo had been doing a makeshift sort of business, and there was obviously a shortage of food. He especially observed the women and children, as Lucy had done; he tried to see them with her eyes, and he agreed that it was a sorry sight. When he lowered the glass he put

it away in a chest of his own belongings, telling her that she must oblige him by not using it again so long as the slaves were there—"and that will not be long," he told her; De Sopo was hoping to send them down the river any day and any hour. He begged her to contain herself. His own business was urgent for the time, and he could not go away.

"Let me go with Atemba," she urged. "I could go down the river with Atemba—we should be safe."

"Yes," he said, "and find yourself in a fleet of slave canoes—or sleeping in Taylor's house when the cargo is landing! You must content yourself," he told her, "for you are a trader's wife. It will not be long."

Chapter Two

BUT IT WAS LONG. TWO LONG DAYS FROM then, when Lucy sat before a dressing table she had made of packing boxes and muslin, De Sopo came to confer with Harford, and his Mpongwe girl—breaking bounds—came with him. Lucy saw her shadow in the mirror, dark against the orange daylight at the door. She turned

and looked at her; the girl moved into the room as though Lucy's glance were a summons; she came near, looking gravely about at the white woman's possessions.

"How you health, Mamee?" she said in her soft insinuating voice. And the aura of her feminity, fostered as it was and cultured in its kind, startled Lucy, so long used to men and to the hardy alien Fang women.

"What for you come here, Mamee?" asked the girl. "This never be proper town for beach woman."

"What for *you* come here?" asked Lucy.

"My white man come; he speak for you man. He ask you man: 'What for you no fit for give proper food for them slaves? They live for die they no catch food. Plenty pickaninny die; night come we throw him for bush!' My massa ask you man: 'What for you no give proper chop? You like all my slaves die, we throw him for river?' "

Lucy sat staring at the girl, not knowing all that she had said. And the soft voice went on: "Hallifodi say he never be fit for feed all them slaves. My massa say, 'You please feed all them sick slaves, all them pickaninny—those women holler all night you never feed them!' Hallifodi say, 'No, goddam, I never feed them slaves—I got big taboo, I never feed slaves!' "

Lucy's hand fell from her head, letting her hair fall, and the Mpongwe, grown bolder, touched it softly as she had often wished to do. She sang a little chant of admiration in her own tongue. Lucy did not draw away; she was grown used to the pleasure of black women in her hair and skin. She answered Esala perfunctorily when the girl asked, "What tribe be your slave Atemba? Where you get that boy?" She was sunk in dark thoughts. She did not know when Esala went away.

At table that night she asked Harford if De Sopo came to see him, and when he answered "Yes" and no more, she asked him, "Why?"

"He cannot let me alone about food for his slaves—he says they will starve if Taylor doesn't send for them soon. He has cleaned out the Fang—they had little to spare. And he cannot agree that I am not here to sell him food."

"Cannot you?" questioned Lucy heavily.

"I cannot. I have vowed that I am not a slaver, nor a partner of slavers. Either I do a legitimate trade in Africa or I get out!" Harford flung himself sidewise to the table—he had hoped to put away this palaver long enough to eat his palm-oil chop and baked plantain. He felt himself to be harried to death. De Sopo would go down the river that night, he told her, to see what could be done, though fearing to leave the

barracoon in charge of the crew of Benga. A gang of slaves should be under the surveillance of not less than three white men.

"He says he cannot trust the Benga not to sleep at night. He had the hardihood to ask me if I would not serve him in his absence. He isn't such a bad fellow, either; I'd do him a service if I could, and I pity him."

Harford presently went down to the landing to see De Sopo off; he asked Lucy if she could spare half a dozen of her soda biscuits for De Sopo, and a pot of the preserve she had made of an edible forest fruit. She made a little pack of these; she saw her husband go away with his hurricane lamp, and she went to his chest, from which she took his spyglass.

Atemba lighted her way to her cabin, as was his habit at night. The soft dark of the tropics was vibrant with the ineluctable

unbroken singing of insects in the grass at the edge of the forest wall. The rains were near again and the insects and the frogs spread an immense fabric beneath the stars. There was no moon; the drumming in the villages was desultory. Suddenly the slaves wailed—faintly, and stronger, and fully, the voice of wailing filled the river valley. Lucy trembled; she sank upon the lower step of her cabin.

"Oh, why, Atemba," she shuddered, "do they wail?" And he told her they wailed because their father was going away. De Sopo was going down the river, so they wailed.

But how was he their father, she asked. Had he not bought them, and would he not sell them? How was he their father? "He is certainly that," Atemba told her, "their father. Without him they would starve, and they fear to see him go. They say, 'O our

Father, O! We die of hunger, O! Pity your children, O! Do not leave us, lest we starve!' And perhaps they will starve," Atemba added dispassionately.

The wailing flowed like a river through the dark. Atemba listened to his mistress's anguished command that he go to the slaves and beg them not to wail. He thought this a silly invention, but he did not cross his white woman. He would go, he said, if they did not stop—but it would not be a long wailing, for it was no more than a farewell.

It ceased. Atemba went away, and an hour later Harford found Lucy seated on the step of her cabin, the light from her hurricane lamp shining sweetly on her white dress and up into her face. Her mournful dark eyes met his that answered them sternly. "This woman," he thought, "is out of place."

Chapter Three

AT NOON THE NEXT DAY, HARFORD, WHO was surrounded by a rustic group and was weighing ivory, did not see Lucy return his glass to his chest. At their midday meal she questioned him closely as to De Sopo's plans and whether he would be home the next day or the day after that. Not for three days, he told her, and added that the cargo canoes

would be longer in coming than that. It was De Sopo's plan to make a place for the slaves on the beach, although that was against his interest and judgment; but the loss if they were to remain in the barracoon, with food so scarce, would be heavy. He must risk the move to the beach.

Harford hoped—and he wished, in his present preoccupation, to believe—that Lucy did not know the death rate among the slaves. He was glad to forget that he could not see his way to help, and he was elated at the spread of his trade. A company from Ayos had traveled a week by canoe to sell him their ivories; they came, trailing their leopard skins and speaking a modified dialect, from a remote people whose trade he had labored to develop. When night came, and the last man and dog on leash had gone down the hill and off up the river, Harford sank into his chair with a

tot of rum, and he could have wished to be alone in his clearing. He wished he need not see his wife at table lest she trouble him with questions. But she was as silent as himself. Had he looked at her he would not have known her for the laughing girl who had hung on his arm when they had first climbed the hill to the factory not a year ago. He would have been struck, had he looked at her, by her thinness, her look of strain, her pallor, her rough and broken hair. But, after the custom of companions who live together without lapse, neither of these two was attentive to the aspect of the other, and Lucy sank away into the shadow of her obsession unobserved.

When Atemba lit the lamp in her cabin that night, Lucy spoke with him. She asked him if he had been born a slave. Atemba was a headman's son, he told her. "It is a strange thing," he thought, "how long the

white people are in framing the first of questions." She asked him if the big gate to the barracoon was locked with a key. Atemba said it was, barred and locked with a key, and that there were other precautions about the outer wall—there was an outer wall and an inner door. A passage, very short, led from the gate to the inner door. All the building, Atemba told her, was rough. The barracoon in which he himself had been imprisoned once was strong; none could have looked into that barracoon. And with that memory a terrible excitement began to flow into his heart, threatening his control. He felt a current of intention, obscure as yet, lift him from his accepted groove. He gave his attention, suddenly creative, subtly perceptive, to Lucy—trying to penetrate her secret thought, conscious of an intense dynamic at work beneath her fixed composure.

She asked him who had the key to the

gate—if De Sopo had it; and he said he did not know. He was silent. And then he said there was one who knew who had the key, and if his Mamee commanded him to ask that one he would do so. When Lucy pressed him for the name of that one, he said it was Esala, De Sopo's woman. She would know who had the key. If his Mamee commanded him to do so, he would return, when night was in the middle, with that knowledge.

While Lucy pondered upon this, he looked in her mirror, taking counsel with his dark and secret image that spoke to him there, eye to eye. Behind him in the dim reflection stood the white woman listening to a strong inner voice. She would tell him to go. And if she did not tell him, still he would go—for he felt an irresistible quickening toward a course that was clearing, like a path when dawn reveals it. When Lucy

told him that he must do as he had said, his going was a passion of acquiescence. The swift withdrawal of his energy from her cabin and from the clearing left Lucy like a castaway, with the tide on the ebb—she felt a vast fatigue and the hurry of her heart beating.

Harford's window shed an orange light and then was dark; there was now no light in the forest. Upon the dark the Southern Cross was erected and leaned again to its decline; occasionally a bird called or a band of monkeys clamored briefly; a late moon rose behind the cabins, and their black shadows bit into the flooding light.

At something like two o'clock Atemba stood in the shadow of Lucy's west window; he had the key and gave it to her. Esala, he said, had given him the key to hold until the dark before the dawn. "What shall I tell the white woman," he thought, "if she

asks me why Esala gave me the key?" But Lucy did not ask that or any other question —she seemed to dream.

Atemba came to the door and opened it; beyond the shadow where he stood there was a wash of moonlight in the clearing. "Mamee," he asked her with an utmost urgence, "when you let the slaves go—am I then free?"

He saw Lucy startle as if she woke. She asked him if he saw the Benga guards and if they were sleeping. He had found them sleeping—and that was because their master was away and because the slaves, they knew, were weak from sickness and from hunger. Atemba had wakened the guards as he passed, telling them there was a leopard abroad in the clearing on moonlight nights. Only strangers and white men, he told them, were ignorant of this—all others seeking a shelter to sleep in. The Benga men, he said,

had given him thanks and had said that they must lie outside to watch the slaves. There was a house, he had told them, near the gate; they had better lie there. If the leopard caught them, who would watch the slaves? Would their master not then blame them that they had not listened to the warning of Hallifodi's man? After which reasoning, Atemba told Lucy, they had risen from their bed of leaves upon the ground and had gone away into the house. The house, Atemba told her, looked away from the barracoon. It was a strange thing, he told her, but they went into that house. "Ah, Mamee," he said in a voice of profoundest passion, "when you let the slaves go—"

She did not answer him—she moved past him down the steps into the moonlight. She took no account of him. But later, when they were in the shadow of the trail to the river, he pressed his fate again: "Ah, Mamee,

am I, too, free? When it is taboo for you to have a slave, and it is taboo for Hallifodi to have a slave, am I free?" He was behind her in the trail; he heard her say yes. He took the key from her hand; her hand was hot, and, with his faculty of perception at its highest level, he was aware, among a multitude of impressions, that she had a fever. He wished that her dress were dark; it glimmered, and her skirt was noisy among the grasses. He wished that she were sure to do as he might find occasion to tell her; he wished that he were in control, as a man should be—and his will leaped before him in the path. When she came to the end of the shadowed trail and to the verge of the clearing about the barracoon, he bade her wait, and they stood still.

In the mild clear light of the moon the stockade of the barracoon rose to the height of about twelve feet; they were standing a

hundred feet from its southeast corner. Midway of the eastern wall there was, curiously, a great tree; it was incorporated in the stockade, and it made, of a morning, shade upon the glare on the floor of the barracoon. It is to be supposed that De Sopo had left it there because it presented difficulties in felling, and its crest of branches, high upon the pillar of its bole, was not hospitable to escape. The river ran fifty yards from the west wall; the space between was cleared and was now in shadow. The gate was in the south wall; it was barred, and the lock was a padlock. The guards were not in sight; the fire by which they had slept was sunk to embers, and their leafy beds were dark on the ground. There was no sound of life, only the river's running.

Suddenly from behind the wall of the barracoon there rose a woman's faint and plaintive wailing—like a thread of smoke

from a small fire on a windless air. Atemba knew it for a cry of remembrance. Without warning Lucy floated out into the moonlight; she was at the gate before he was; her hand was at her lip while he unlocked the gate. They stepped swiftly into the passage; Atemba drew the gate to; the key was in his hand. The passage was eight feet long—the depth of the lean-to that ran about the inner wall; the door at the end of this short passage was barred but not locked. The delicate cry rose again. Lucy threw up the iron bar, and they were in the yard of the barracoon.

Chapter Four

THE MOON WAS ABOVE THE EASTERN wall; the shadow of the great tree was upon the trodden ground of the western half of the enclosure. Under the thatch of the lean-to the slaves slept in the shadow. Lucy —who had brooded so many days upon the comings and goings of the many dark bodies, now cooking, now eating, now lamenting—

was alone with the moonlight in the clearing. She was arrested in a still enchantment. Atemba saw that she did not see a woman gray with dust who lay upon the earth, and swifter than her perception he sprang to where the woman lay. Catching her about the middle, he brought her to her feet, one hand over her mouth. Her eyes stared at Lucy while he dragged her to the passageway. Atemba summoned Lucy with a movement of his head; they were in the passage before she had caught her breath, and Atemba was speaking in the woman's ear. He instructed her; Lucy saw her eyes focus on his words. He released her—she was a young woman ravaged with hunger; she was gone back into the compound like the flowing of water.

Atemba drew Lucy through the outer gate; he closed it, and they slid by the south wall in the moonlight to the shadow under the

west wall. In that shadow Lucy fell to trembling, her teeth chattered, and she leaned against the wall. Presently she vomited. Atemba, seeing that she could not stand, supported her. She moaned, and he was appalled, but his decision was as swift as breath. He carried her to the water's edge; the jetty was in moonlight, and he was too much a forest creature to move that way; he laid Lucy among the leaves at the foot of the forest wall, first stirring them with his foot; he covered her white dress with his own dark cloth. He let himself down into the water that ran deep by this bank, and returned with a small canoe—it was the ferryman's canoe and its anchorage well known. Lucy was past speech. He laid her in the seepage in the bottom of the canoe; drawing her dress along her sides, he spread his cloth over her and pushed off into the stream. He could see a flowing of dark bodies along the

bright south wall of the barracoon; they disappeared into the shadow of the west wall. He dipped his paddle, making upstream.

A river silence fell on the canoe; Lucy's sigh was light. Coming to a little beach landing, the canoe wavered. Atemba gave a bird call; there was no answer. Under the deep shade of a wooded bank he whistled again and waited, but not long; Lucy moaned and stirred; he cleared the bank and paddled upstream. He dipped his paddle three or four times before he heard an answer to his call—a bird whistled among the branches that swung from the near margin. Atemba held the canoe and scanned the forest wall. He drew in to a log and found a backwater in the thicket; the river glittered in midstream, but here was a moon dusk. Esala crept out on the log, and Atemba held out to her the key. She took it, thrusting it

into a basket under her arm; drawing the canoe alongside, she boarded, startling when she felt Lucy's body under the cloth. The paddle sank into the water, the canoe shot out into the stream, and there was silence on the river.

In the moonlight Atemba saw that Esala had whitened her face with clay, after the manner of the Fang who mourn, and that she was as naked as a Fang woman, that she had painted dark designs on her body, which was smooth and without the inevitable Fang tattoo. He understood that she was joining her fate with his, and he felt a rush of pride and passion. It was true of Atemba that he was a chief's son and of no mean tribe. How far his home was, or where it might be, he could not know; he could look up at the stars and take counsel of them; soon, too, he must counsel with Esala. It did not appear to him what he must do with the white

woman; his swift planning had not foreseen the present difficulty—he had thought that Lucy would steal away to her cabin when they had left the barracoon. But there was no hope of that now; he knew the course of her fevers, and that she would be helpless for not less than a day. Nothing in his heart swerved from his intention of escape; he was as single as an arrow that has been released from the bow; all his wisdom was fused to an instinct, and he knew that he must go upriver swiftly all the night—and without words.

Neither he nor Esala could pass in prolonged intercourse as Fang. A canoe from upriver hailed them, surveyed them in the moonlight, and, seeing the ashen face of Esala, the paddler asked them who had died. "A child," said Atemba. Esala wailed faintly, and the canoe went its way. But Lucy, when Esala wailed, stirred again,

moaned, and would have sat up. Atemba steered into a backwater; the canoe stole up this dark shallow until he knew by the evil smell that he was at the end of the inlet, and in a pool where the women of a village were used to soak their manioc. He shipped his paddle and crept along the length of the canoe to Esala in the bow. He began to speak to her softly in their only common tongue, which was Fang. Under the intense dark Lucy sighed and slept.

Presently from the forest the guinea fowl called the near approach of morning, and in the dark the two dark heads drew apart, the murmur of voices ceased, the canoe slid back to the river. Time was pressing, but they knew what they must do. Before the pallor of dawn Esala had guided Atemba to a trodden beach; it was the landing of the headman Efa Ngoto, who had a village near by in the forest. She knew that place well, hav-

ing camped there with De Sopo more than once. A shelter with three walls under thatch was in common use at the landing. It stood clear of the forest, which was here of great trees, and open. They must work quickly before day. Coming ashore, they drew up the canoe, and Atemba lifted Lucy, who was now in a stupor. Esala was before him in the shelter; she found the embers of a fire that was always there upon the ground of the hut, and that would be renewed many times in the day by the villagers as they came and went upon the river. With a burning log for a light, she looked about the hut; there was no snake, no filth, no menace. Atemba, standing with Lucy across his shoulder, watched her; he was ready at the signal to lay his mistress down. She sighed, relaxing on the bed and turning her head away upon the wooden pillow. Esala adjusted her dress. Atemba would have

thrown his cloth about her, but Esala caught it up; she drew the logs together, and a thread of smoke rose. Swift as shadows the two were gone, and the canoe, dark a moment on the glitter of the river, disappeared.

Chapter Five

THE SMOKE AMONG THE LOGS BECAME A flame; the mists of morning rose in the moonlight; the river spoke and spoke against the little beach; a monkey looked into the open shelter with surprise, and was intimidated; with the gray light a million parrots woke to their domestic disagreements and were articulate. The clamor of day woke in

the forest. And the first fisherman coming down the village trail looked in at the hut. As if he were winged, he stood again in the street of the village. "There is a magic by the river!" he told his friends. "A strange one is there!"

But the headman, when he saw the strange one, knew it for the wife of Hallifodi, having seen that woman many times. He was appalled.

Behind him and pressing upon him and upon one another, the people of his village crowded, struck with wonder. Their voices, discreet at first, grew in volume and in stress, but Lucy did not move until an old woman broke into a high crying wail. Other women wailed, and the white woman, moaning faintly, moved her head, moved her hand, and was still again.

"She lives! She breathes!" cried out the agitated people of the village of Efa Ngoto.

Efa himself, though much against his will, —for who knew how the matter stood either with the white woman's husband or in the more supernatural implications?—got himself ready to go to Hallifodi. He was deliberate in his preparations, wishing that his experience had fitted him for the present adventure and for the part he had to play. He put on the best he had—and that was a military coat and a red fez cap, both bought of Hallifodi himself. He chose swift rowers. He gave instructions that no one of his village was to approach the white woman, none was to go under the thatch, but that his head wife herself, with those women whom she should choose, was to watch from without the hut. Only Evina was not to watch. She was his present favorite wife and was with child; she must beware dark powers. He went away in the sunlight.

It was presently warm in the shadow of

the thatch, and with the passage of the day the sun shone there. The women, four and five at a time, pitied the white woman with their eyes. They sang plaintive songs—spontaneous little ballads about the white woman who had come to lie upon the bed of their village. She had come by the river, O! She had no child, O! Alone she had come, O! She said no word, O! Her beautiful hair, O! Her fine white cloth, O! They struck their hands softly for an accompaniment to their songs.

The white woman whimpered and sighed, and the black women more than ever sang their plaintive songs. These songs, they thought, were good for that magic, for with the afternoon Lucy was still. Harford heard them singing at the bend of the river, and his heart turned over.

The Fang women fell away when the white man came to look at his woman. They

had not gone near her all day; they could in no way be to blame for her death—if indeed she was dead.

She was dead. The women saw her hand fall from Harford's. They saw him look into her eyes. They burst into a wail, and the entire village of Efa Ngoto wailed.

Harford sat down on a piece of firewood; he could no longer stand on his feet. Nothing of all this was clear to him. The face of his wife was a secret silence in a great clamor. He had not eaten that day; news of the empty barracoon had shattered his morning, and with noon Efa Ngoto had stood at the door with news of a wife he had hardly missed. No, he had not missed her; he had been all morning with the Benga guards and with the straggling slaves who had returned to beg from him a handful of rice.

How had she come here, and why? Was this really his wife? A laughing girl, a chat-

terer—now to be lying so pale and sunken in this rude shelter—lost here in a strange forest. Lying here without a word. No answer. How had she come here? Had she been poisoned? Her dress was draggled. Her hair was disordered. He stooped to put her poor hands beside her, and on the dust of the ground he saw a key. Abstractedly with his foot he pushed it aside—the headman should have a care of his keys.

THE END

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